The MINISTER'S QUARTERLY

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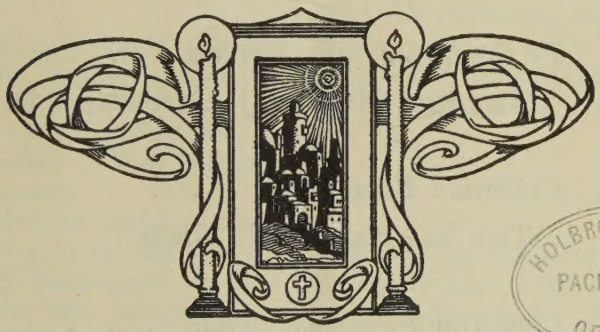

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Editor

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THE MINISTER'S QUARTERLY

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Report of the Commission on the Ministry

THE Commission on the Ministry has been engaged in the completion of the organization of the Department of the Ministry and in the performance of such services as it could render to the churches and ministers of our fellowship.

We have sought to develop a clear understanding of our aims and purposes so that we will recognize and care for our common needs in this field. We have assembled the names of all persons serving on Conference or Convention committees having to do with ministerial standing and relationships as a means of learning who among us share official responsibility for the ministry.

We have invited and secured a general exchange of plans, procedures and materials used throughout the country so that we now have a fund of reliable information upon which to base judgment and to plan our service.

It has been a constant source of pleasure and satisfaction to us that our Director, Dr. Fred S. Buschmeyer has been our executive. His keen understanding, his brotherly spirit and his capacity for sustained effort make him a leader par excellence. He has been in constant contact with those serving on Conference committees on the ministry, executives of the Conference, seminary officers and faculty members, students and parish ministers.

In order that all may have an understanding of the place which the minister occupies in our mutual relationships we present two charts: one "The Minister in the Congregational Christian Churches" and two, "The Concerns of the Department and Commission on the Ministry." (See Chart No. 1 on page 4.)

Thus as the first chart indicates we have started with the minister. Here is our responsibility and opportunity. That there may be a sufficient number of leaders who are adequate in character and training and who have a sense of fellowship in the Gospel of Christ in our family of free churches is the supreme reason for our effort.

The list of concerns in Chart two indicates the fields to which we have addressed ourselves in the past biennium. To each of the seven concerns listed certain members of the commission, its joint staff and co-opted individuals have been asked to give their attention. Thus we have sub-committees working as seminar groups each of which is composed of members particularly aware of needs in direct and practical ways. (See Chart No. 2.)

Enlistment

Here at the beginning is a place where the pastor, the Pilgrim Fellowship advisor, the College and University student leader, the representatives of the Boards and Conferences and many others have an opportunity to study the need, suggest and work plans to meet it. Much excellent work is being done in local churches, youth conferences, on college campuses and elsewhere to inspire and enlist the best of our youth for Christian life service. We shall continue to assist in this field to the full extent of our ability.

Education, Training, Growth

There is a splendid spirit of cooperation on the part of many colleges and the seminaries where our candidates are

Chart I

THE MINISTER IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

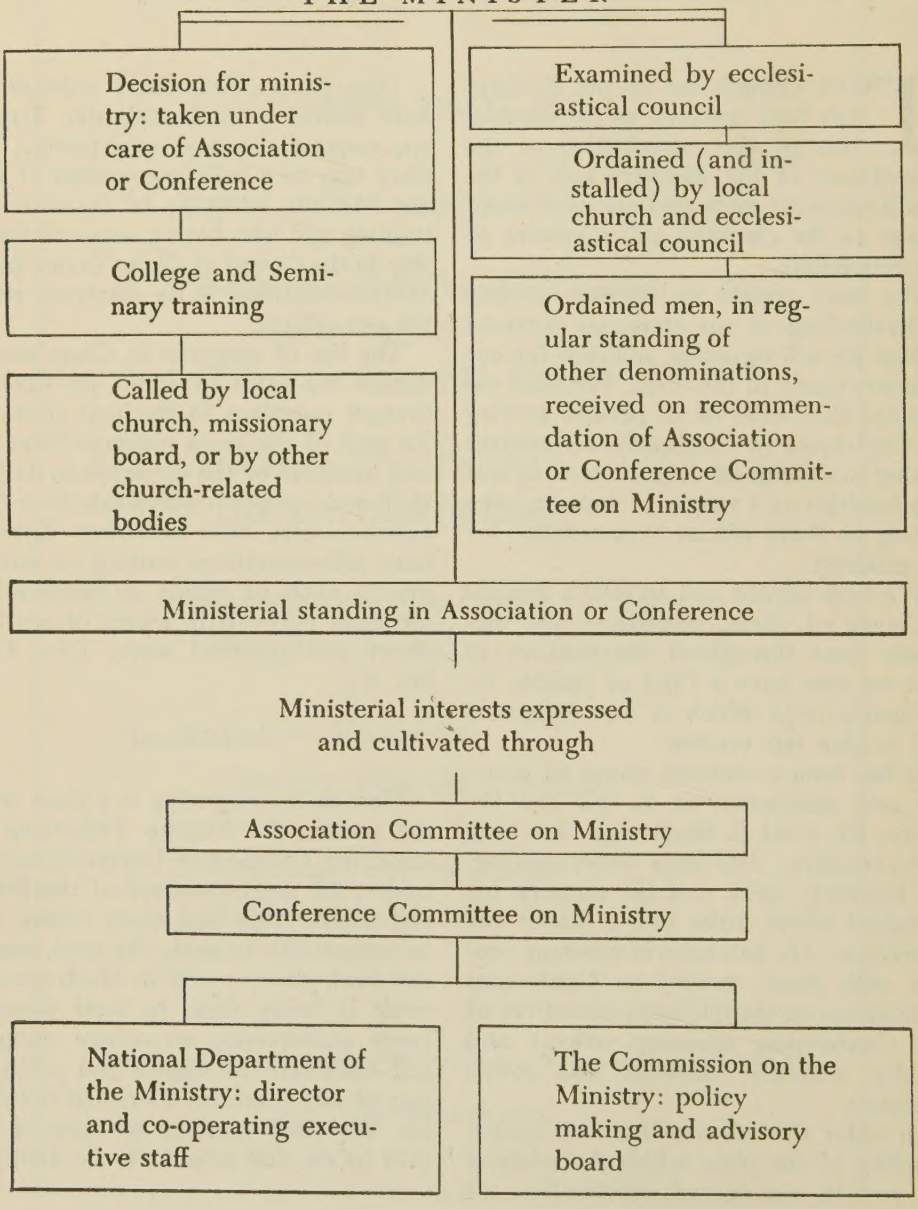
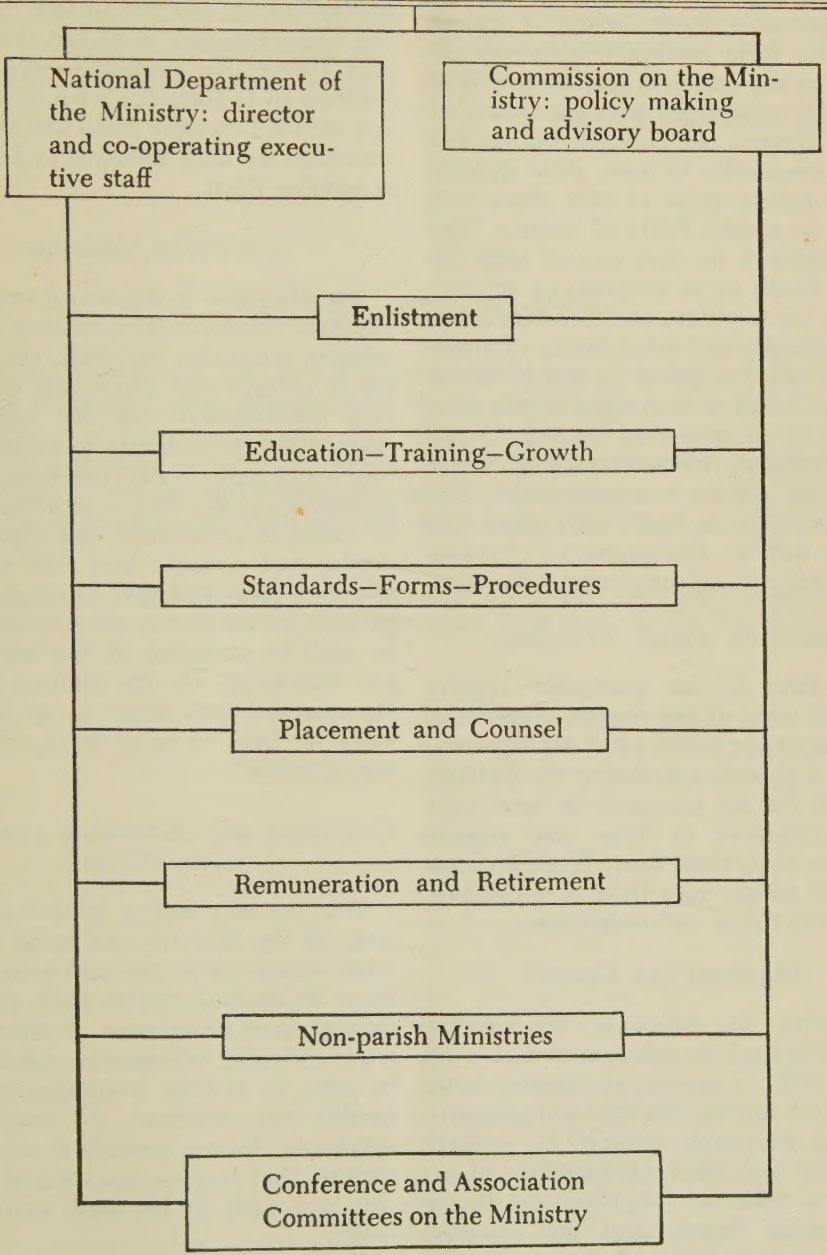

THE MINISTER
Decision for ministry: taken under care of Association or Conference
College and Seminary training
Called by local church, missionary board, or by other church-related bodies
Examined by ecclesiastical council
Ordained (and installed) by local church and ecclesiastical council
Ordained men, in regular standing of other denominations, received on recommendation of Association or Conference Committee on Ministry
Ministerial standing in Association or Conference
Ministerial interests expressed and cultivated through
Association Committee on Ministry
Conference Committee on Ministry
National Department of the Ministry: director and co-operating executive staff
The Commission on the Ministry: policy making and advisory board

Chart II
CONCERNS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND COMMISSION ON THE MINISTRY


National Department of the Ministry: director and co-operating executive staff
Commission on the Ministry: policy making and advisory board
Enlistment
Education–Training–Growth
Standards–Forms–Procedures
Placement and Counsel
Remuneration and Retirement
Non-parish Ministries
Conference and Association Committees on the Ministry

securing their academic training. The Director, members of the Joint Staff, members of the commission and others have made numerous personal contacts and shared in planned visits to these schools of preparation. Special visits of groups of seniors from seminaries have been arranged at the offices in Boston and New York. In cooperation with the Board of Home Missions our Director was present at the seminaries to meet with students and to inform them of new plans with regard to special fields of service. The Department is in close contact with the Home Board in its program of summer schools for ministers, the Conferences in their institutes and other means of training and help for ministers, and all others who are bound to be assisted in this area. Groups of Associates in Reading, Study and Discussion, one on the east coast and one on the west are now sponsored by this department. It is hoped that these two groups will be the means of forming many study groups throughout the land.

Standards, Forms, Procedures

We have in our possession reports from all parts of the country concerning these important matters and our sub-committee is at work correlating the material at hand for the provision of more adequate assistance to those who request guidance along these lines. While it seems that our usages vary there is a common desire for clarity and orderliness.

Placement and Counsel

Recalling the action of the General Council in 1946 the subcommittee at work in this field is seeking to discover how, in our free pattern, churches and ministers may be adequately assisted in pastoral placement and allied relationships. In cooperation with the Congregational Board of Pastoral Supply and the Midwest Committee we shall work for greater assistance in this area which we believe is a matter of national as well as local concern.

Remuneration and Retirement

Here again are responsibilities which have been assigned to this commission. While we realize that there are no ready answers we are resolved to face the situation and aid insofar as we can. The problems facing this committee will always confront us in some form but in cooperation with the Annuity Fund and all others concerned we shall endeavor to find ways of meeting them.

Non-Parish Ministries

The Chaplains in the armed forces and Veterans Administration, those in schools, colleges, industries, hospitals, etc., teachers in colleges and seminaries, missionaries, administrative officers and many others who are ministers in name and in fact are a part of our fellowship. Your commission feels deeply indebted to all of them. It is resolved that through its service and contacts each one of these ministers shall feel that he belongs with us and that as far as we are concerned he shall be conscious of the warmth of our fellowship. By the ministry of our Director and such means as we shall develop we hope to be of service in every way possible.

Conference and Association Committees on the Ministry

That we may have a greater sense of unity in our diversity and assist one another across conference and associational lines, we are studying the work and practices of these committees. A sub-committee is collecting information and hopes to be able to provide assistance as it is needed and requested. By sharing our standards, forms, procedures and practices we shall increase our sense of fellowship and each do his work more effectively.

We can report that the Registry of Ministers is nearly complete and is proving to be valuable. We are developing it in cooperation with the Year Book De-

partment of the General Council and are confident that it will be of great help to all who need it.

Also we are working on a revision of the popular booklet "Information for Ministers." From time to time we expect to print for general and special use such other helpful material as may be required.

The welfare of our churches and the effectiveness of our witness will always depend upon the quality of our leadership. That the churches may both provide and also possess the best which is possible to secure we shall continue to labor, and to this end we request your continued prayers and support.

JAMES F. ENGLISH, *Chairman*

PRAYER FOR POWER

"God of all power, who hast granted us but to reap the terror of the divided and the transmuted atom when we have left thee out of our human designs; grant us rather to discover such power over ourselves that we may serve together thy universal Kingdom. Thy power within us transforming, uranium and hydrogen shall again be our divinely granted servants instead of cancerous nightmares. Grant us the peace which is ours when we trust in thy power rather than our weak foolishness. Amen."

[Another of these beautiful prayers was used in a former issue. The manuscript was then divided and for this prayer the name of the writer is lost. The Editor apologizes.]

"Harnessing Our Common Energies to the Highest Service"

The Rev. Elden H. Mills

Organ Dedication, West Hartford, Conn., March 12, 1950

"They lifted up their voice with trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever."
II Chronicles 5:15

TODAY we dedicate to the glory of God this king of all instruments of music, the great organ. For seven years this instrument has been on order, ordered back in the days when there was little but faith in some vague future possibility. Some years were then to pass before organs could be manufactured at all, and after that we were 26th in line at the factory, and besides that, there were but a few hundred dollars set aside for its production. It was not until three years ago that one man anonymously came forward to guarantee that, whatever the amount of funds might be on hand at the time our turn came, he would underwrite whatever was necessary to make the organ a certainty. I remember well the first time Mr. Stearns came to try out the old organ in the stone church, and the look of dismay on his face when, having pulled out all the stops, he found only a feeble resemblance to the fine organ at whose console he then presided. He asked, "What are the chances of a good organ in the foreseeable future?" wish-thinking." In his abrupt Vermont way he said, "I'm coming anyway!" Little did we dream then that such a day as this would come in something more than a decade.

The Bible is filled with references to the use of music in praise to God. References to singing number 158, music 15, and organs are mentioned 4 times, and praise, which carries the inference of singing, is numbered in the hundreds. If all these references are put together, their total is as great as all references to prayer, an astonishing fact. The line of Cain, as told in Genesis 4, in the seventh generation, had two artisans of opposite professions—half brothers they were. Tubal-Cain, a forger of brass and iron, the first manufacturer of weapons, and Jubal who was "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." As you know, I think that at its best the Quaker movement comes nearest the gospel of Jesus of any religious group in history, but their obsession against music was wrong, although their original protest was valid. For music and singing and praise run all through Scripture as the natural vehicle of worship. Why, Job puts into the mouth of God, the Creator, telling of the laying of the world's foundations, that then "the morning stars sang together, and all the angels chanted in their joy."

Indeed music's beginning in the soul of man must have been an echo from those elemental strains of creation, for nature is full of song. The evidence is endless — the wind in the "murmuring pines and hemlock," the music of the surf, insects buzzing in the summer air, the fanning wings of the humming bird, the music of the flying "golden eye" which gives it the nickname "whistler," the incomparably beautiful love call of the woodcock in the dusk of evening, made with its wings, the whistle of the cardinal

and the tinkling bell of the wood thrush. Why are you so moved by the soaring tumult of the symphony or the overvaulting voice of Elizabet in "Tannhäuser"? For the same reason you love an open fire, and rejoice to look at the stars at night, and are moved by the mountain view; something elemental in the whole history of the race has focused in you. We love music because God loves music; he has filled his creation with it. The New Testament is not nearly as sombre as we have made it out. The early Christians were not whipped, harried, desolate and whining. But they made much of the sunshine, the splendor, the saints in glory, and music and singing. In "Quo Vadis" the little Christian bands could always be located day or night because they were singing. The dedication of the temple began with music—"They lifted up their voice with trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever."

I

If man first got his idea of musical instruments from either the hollow reed or a string strung tightly between two trees, then of such primitive, elemental and simple stuff were the beginnings of the symphony and the organ. But indeed, how much have we progressed from those fundamental simple originals, except to perfect the construction and use of them. I have spent whole evenings listening to Fritz Kreisler, left vibrant but mute as his incomparable skill and creative art brought forth the best in the violin. But it still remains that violin music is made by the scraping of the hairs of horses' tails across catgut! And so it is this morning that we dedicate this magnificent organ, the basic principles of which are still elemental, wind confined under pressure and channeled so as to be guided through pipes made of wood and metal, the only added feature being that the mechanism is, by the use of thousands of wires, given its releases and action by means of electrical contacts. However complicated the whole instrument, and crowned by the creative art of the musician, its basic being is composed of simple common energies—wind, pipes and electricity. The same metal could be used for salt and pepper shakers, the same wood could be used in your fireplace, and the same electricity will ring your doorbell. But here, these common energies are harnessed for the high purpose of harmony, praise, inspiration, the leadership of heavenly choirs, an echo of the morning stars singing together. Here we have set before us this morning a splendid example of the harnessing of our common energies of life to the highest of service.

II

Now the making of character and the construction of useful lives is simply this same story. Saints and sinners have always been made of identical material. The same fundamental common energies, urges, compulsions and instincts are to be found in all of us. When some person commits a horrible deed, we say that he is a savage, that he has in him the characteristics of the fighting ruthless animal, that he is sensual and passionate. Which indeed he is. And again, some saintly life we have supposed was devoid of all these primitive elements, indicating that the only way to achieve the good life is to eliminate from our being everything that makes the savage so wicked. On the other hand there are those who say we can do little about our baser instincts, and that the normal way of human life is to give them free rein, let them erupt, let them raise their unrestricted havoc. Well, we know what kind of lives those turn out to be. On the other, the sort of interpretation of the religious life that brought the monastery into being—that made the saint the man who could get as far as possible away from the world and all worldliness, who subjected his flesh to physical torment in order to keep subdued every primitive passion of the flesh. St. Jerome has revealed intimately the fight that went

on in his own soul after he went into his desert monastery. He had been a wild youth and he found that becoming a recluse did not solve his problems—he carried with him the same passions which had had free rein in the court life of Rome, he could not run away from them, and his agony of spirit was in constant turmoil. Says one, "Most folk are in one of these two classes: barbarians with penitent and wistful interludes, or good men with unconquered mutinies."

We sometimes use the term "materialist" in a derogatory manner—I have done it, and have felt justified. But we are all materialists in the sense that our lives are constructed entirely out of the common energies that can be described as basic instincts — self-preservation, the pugnacious spirit that makes man the fighting animal that he is, ambition and self-assertion. But the difference between the materialist and the spiritual man consists always in this—that he is able to organize his life so as to take his basic instincts and convert them to highest use, transform them by noble purpose. The highest life we know is one who has taken the common elements of human nature and transformed them, spiritualized them, and dedicated them to higher uses. The difference between the sinner and the saint is not that the sinner has low elemental instincts and passions and the saint has none of them. The good man has taken the same common energies and spiritualized them, transformed them by making them serve high ends. It was Jacob Boehme who said that the ideal man "has all his fiery energies harnessed to the service of the light." Suppose Henry Ward Beecher had suppressed his fighting instinct. Faced with any wickedness of his day, like the slave trade, he bellowed forth saying—"All the bells in my belfry will ring out against it." Religion has often given evidence of repression, but far oftener the common basic energies were harnessed to some new high purpose. Think what ambition and native energies of John Wesley, which drove him to preach never less than three times a day and often as many as five, every day for thirty years, would have done in the business world if he had let them. In the old days he would have been a soldier in the Crusades, or a pirate on the high seas. Every high cause has been served by those who put their basic human energies to the service of the highest. And, when this fact is coupled with the artistic genius which is the glory of human personality, then it is that we are at times enraptured with divine surprise. Someone has said that even God himself was surprised when he first heard Beethoven's Fifth.

III

"They lifted up their voice with trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever." So this organ is a symbol of our church life. It too has harnessed ordinary materials for highest purposes. Perhaps it is a parable in other ways. Here are something more than four thousand pipes, just about twice the number of our membership. In most organs in the past there are rows of gaudy pipes that are placed in front of the organ chamber, pipes which give the appearance of considerable prestige, but which really are dummies. They are there for looks—they make no music; they do no work. Here they are conspicuously absent. I wonder if that is symbolic of the membership of this church; I wish I could say positively that just as we have omitted the dummy pipes in this chancel, so our rolls are devoid of inactive members. I'm not much for the use of symbols, but the symbol of the old dead pipes that were for show purposes, giving forth no response when keys were pushed, was a picturesque likeness of too many who are on church rolls, but are otherwise not connected up. As one Methodist minister commented upon his inactive members—"they are Methodists for funeral purposes only."

Last night one oboe note would not

respond. You press the key and now it is silent. I suppose it was overlooked during rehearsal yesterday, and, being that self-conscious, and touchy, said to itself—"Tomorrow I won't play." Sometimes a most disquieting thing happens—instead of not sounding, a note suddenly decides to stick, and it keeps on its clamorous wail regardless of change of key or chord—the official name for it is a "cypher." Perhaps that is better than to keep a petulant silence, although we all know how irritating some people are when they keep harping on the same note, long after new harmonies have developed. From time to time this and every organ has to be tuned—dirt settles in the reeds or temperature changes have been too severe. We have had a master tuner and voicer—as you see in the bulletin, one by the fitting name of Piper has tuned and voiced this organ who has had charge of the organs of England's greatest cathedrals. So to the Christian, Jesus is absolute pitch—the tuner and voicer of our lives; that is why the time of worship is so important to us all, that as Christians we may be kept in tune.

One word has been on our lips this morning more than once—"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." This is an electro-pneumatic organ—electrically the manipulation of the keys calls for certain notes. When the call comes from a certain key the electric contact releases the wind for that particular pipe or reed, and the wind comes rushing through. "Pneumatic"—directly from a New Testament word "pneuma" which means wind or breath. It is the same word in the New Testament which means Spirit of God, Holy Spirit, or Holy Breath. At Pentecost the Spirit manifested itself as a mighty "pneuma." So we are charged to let the Holy Pneuma work through our lives, that the harmonies and life of song may come for those who claim to be children of God. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

And now—in the solemn moment of dedication, uniting our voices in responsive declaration of our consecration of this glorious instrument to the highest service, and ourselves as channels of the divine—we will rise to give our praise, remaining standing through the choir "Amen."

Christianity: *The* Esthetic

Congregationalism's Relation to it

The Rev. Fred Smith
Box 291, Ellis, Kansas

THAT Christianity, within the framework of what is known as the Congregational-Christian churches, has not been growing up as fast as it might, or should with regard to the basic fact stated in our title, is evident to any discerning observer. This is not to say, however, that it has been making some progress, in minor ways during recent years, toward this goal. Some observers, not fully informed with regard to the basic fact that Christianity is, first and last, *the* esthetic which should find expression in those aspects of worship which are summed up in the word: churchianity, have thought that the Congregational-Christian churches were coming on splendidly. With a sense of rightful pride they might point to the fact that the Congregational national organ: *The Advance,* has now, for some years been carrying a two-page centerpiece depicting the manner and nature of this advance. The beautiful has been there exalted in such a way that it has almost become a dogma in the architecture of this denomination to make a necessity of the chancel arrangement in the interior of their churches. This is the superlative arrangement to which no other can be compared. Chancelitis is accounted a prime virtue.

Recalling what Congregationalism was in the long ago and what it has come to be in our time in relation to the beautiful in its church buildings, internally as well as externally, an acute observer sees a total result which, to say the least, is curious if not even contradictory in its expression. But not many Congregationalists seem to know it. 'Tis a pity that it should be so, since such an anomaly cannot be described as a philosophy. Something has gone haywire in our Congregational architecture instead of holy to produce so diverse a result. We are producing something that is pretty, but not profound in the buildings of today. Let us see why, for the good of our heaven.

I

Take our much lauded chancels. Historically they stem direct from the cathedral pattern of the Middle Ages. Then the Western World called Europe had a unified faith whose every stone and piece of furniture in its churches was a sermon in symbol. A cathedral of the Old World was theology expressed in wood and stone. It breathed the word of life, even though at times the Inquisition gave a sulphurous taint to sacramental bread and wine. Escaping hell, Gothic flowered to high heaven in articulated aspirations. Belief came to expression in buildings and it was glorious. This is not true, in the same total sense, of the built-up cathedrals of modern America. To follow through with this difference is to touch a wider theme than our present topic calls for. The mention of it, however, is apposite to it because it draws attention to an often overlooked deficiency in the present esthetic outlook of Congregationalism. Let us proceed to elucidate.

I have just mentioned the ancestry of the chancel formation. The nature of my mention of it was enough to show that it came to be the shape it was, not in the

mere interest of prettiness, but because it expressed a philosophy of life. A philosophy of life that could do no other than flower into poetry. In his own lovely way Emerson told the story for us in his poem: *The Problem.*

Not from a vain or shallow thought
His awful Jove young Phidias brought,

. . . . . .

Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burden of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,—
The canticles of love and woe;
The hand that rounded Peter's dome,
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,
Wrought in a sad sincerity:
Himself from God he could not free;
He builded better than he knew;—
The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Why? Simply because man, though weak and sinful, was aspiring to goodness in a mighty and magnificent way. Through the sacrifice of Christ man could rise to heights sublime. There on the altar was the cure. The church made provision for confession that had been made possible through the crucified One. So it came to pass that the total church building became a profound symbol of this faith. Every cathedral became a cross, with the gospel-seeking ones crying: "My God, my God, why have we forsaken Thee?" This was their story. There, in the cross, they found salvation. And the symbol grew from glory unto glory as religion grew in man.

With the Reformation religion took on a prophetic note. The pulpit came into power. The chancel disappeared and the pulpit became centralized. Instead of the ornamented cathedral telling a story in every line and curve there arose the denuded conventicles where two or three gathered together to hear THE Word. All that the reformers thought they needed in their extremity was a book, a word, and the plainest of shelters. The sacerdotally overburdened ones found refreshment in the denuding, temporarily. Their souls were uplifted because their shoulders were lightened. But life pales when it is keyed alone to duty. The new hot gospellers coined a beatitude which became a boomerang. They went wrong in equating the thought that "Blessed are the puritans, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," to that of the beatitude that "Blessed are the pure in heart." The ascetic crucified the esthetic, forgetting that virtue cannot come to fullness without the vitamin of beauty.

II

It is to this central truth that Protestanism in general, of which Congregationalism is a part, has been coming in recent years in a confused way. It is now a common faith among the common people that churches should be "nice" and "pretty." But when you ask them the reason why, they are stumped. "It's the custom." Watch the average Protestant minister and the average Protestant choir conducting themselves in a chancel church and you will learn much of what they do not know. To the informed mind the reason is not hard to find. In the main it stems from the fact that our modern churches come to be the shape they are, esthetically, because somebody is following a fad instead of expressing a faith. That is to say, referring to our Congregational rash of chancel churches, we are building so because it is the fashion and not because we are profoundly philosophical. For souls craving beauty this is better than nothing. But, for heaven's sake, where beauty finds its perfect home, is this fashion-following building the best that we can do?

Verily, verily, we have received our reward. Where we have an ornamented architecture that stems from superficiality rather than from spirituality, an architecture which does not *grow* out of our own spiritual experience, the result is apt

to be hollow men instead of holy men. Where we have a copy-cat architecture instead of a creative architecture there may be revealed a sorry story instead of a spiritual one; a story that shows we have wealth in our pocketbooks but not health in our principles. The Lord save me from seeing churches that are "the exact replica of Westminster Abbey or Cologne Cathedral" bearing for added virtue the name of some multimillionaire donor, except in so far as I can change them into the glory that they ought to be. A comment which brings me to the heart of the matter but not in the manner of Kenneth Grahame! I beg your pardon, I find that the comment brings me also to the art of the matter.

III

As I see Congregationalism, after a long acquaintance with it through a quarter of a century, it is rather an anemic branch of the total church. Save in the offshoot called Social Action, it is not overly aggressive. Relative to our present topic this is greatly but unexpectedly shown in our church building. Our founding fathers, well called Pilgrim Fathers, came to power when it was necessary to make of Christianity an argument. The sermon was the thing, not the symbol. Now the time has come for us to make of it an art. And many there be who are working to that end. For reasons that were temporarily justifiable their activities took a chancel trend. It was good for Congregationalists to become somewhat traditional. An ultra-puritanism had outrun its parenthood in a glorification of individualism. As John B. Sheerin, editor of the *Catholic World,* notes: "Individuality is the wild horse of Protestantism," a fact for whch we are paying dear in our day. But that is another story. For us the point of proper return has been made, if not over-made, in building along traditional lines. But, of all church groupings, Congregationalists should not long abide in that activity. Congregational churches should be more than a manifestation of echoes too long prolonged. Architecturally Congregationalism needs to learn more than it has that its function is to propagate new outlooks on truth rather than to perpetuate old traditions that are largely moded. Strange it is to hear from almost every side of Congregationalism in this regard the exhortation to copy instead of the voice that cries: create.

Recently there came to my desk our denominational paper *Advance.* In it was an article by one of our most famed leaders of Social Action concerning the chancelized church. I turn with eagerness to it. From such a one I expected a rousing clarion call for creativity in church architecture. But I was disappointed. Instead of a call to a new architecture, commensurate with the new social order in which all progressives believe, I found a weak justification of the orthodox chancel with the pulpit playing second violin (since fiddles have no place in chancel churches) to the altar symbol. Remembering T. S. Eliot I felt that the words were those of one who had been etherized upon the altar of chancelitis.

IV

Is it not time that we grew up to the fact that Congregationalism, in the matter of church buildings, should be a voice and not merely an echo? That high opportunity will not be expressed until our seminaries become committed to it more than they are at present. If there is one that has risen to the full measure of this opportunity I shall be glad to know of it. Observe that I can the "full measure." The thing I am asking for is that our seminaries be built around the central core of truth that Christianity is *the* esthetic. It is more than an evangel; an ethic. It is *the* esthetic. Congregationalism architecturally should be more than the echo of two ancient traditions for our tremendous time, in which and by which we look like puritans on the outside of our buildings and like medievalists on the

inside. Surely it is time for us to look our part in the ongoing of the twentieth century instead of looking like a two-sided semi-detached expression of the seventeenth century on the outside of our churches and the thirteenth century on the inside. This transformation will not come to pass overnight. It calls for closer application to it, first, in our seminaries. For if our leaders take not the highway how can the common folk know it?

Much could be said as to method and technique here, but my space is already gone. One suggestion of a revolutionary nature might be made to the effect that perhaps our theological students might be given the task of taking down some of our Gothic structures to rebuild them nearer to the heart's desire that they might be the "sermons in stone" needed by a space-time conquering age that knows a technique of slaughter which is geared to the theory of relativity but whose technique of architecture stumbles along in fashions which for Congregationalists should be now outmoded.

NIGHT AND DAY

The Rev. James W. Kemmerer
Freehold, N. J.

Light comes at morning, dark at night,
And in between are Eight O'Clock and Noon,
When day starts fading out of sight,
With starlit sky and golden moon.

Life has its cycle, night and day.
Time gathers up the moments as they pass,
Lets vigor slowly ebb away
Till youth meets age beneath the sun-kissed grass.

Ye Complaints of a Parson

The Rev. Howard J. Chidley, D.D.
Winchester, Mass.

DURING my summer vacations I make it a point to worship in rural churches. Fifteen years of such visiting has emphasized certain weaknesses in their services, though I can gratefully recall some luminous and uplifting experiences to offset the general effect. I like to worship in country churches. I was brought up in one, and it hurts me when I see slipshod conduct of public worship in any church. It is also fair to say that these shortcomings are also found in suburban and city churches, though not so frequently.

First, as to pastoral prayer. The call to prayer by one minister was, "Let us assume an attitude of prayer." Generally speaking, the pastoral prayer is too long, and is frequently a potpourri of ritualistic prayers and improvisations by the minister. This is the unforgivable sin in a public prayer. The minister is also apt to pray to the congregation, not to God. It could sometimes be said of him, as a young reporter inadvertently wrote of a prayer by Phillips Brooks on a public occasion, that it was the most eloquent prayer ever offered to a Boston audience.

Incidentally, I find that most of my assistants make two mistakes in public prayer. They give too much information to God, and they pray too long. One of my assistants once prayed fifteen minutes. When I called his attention to it he replied, "I was just getting on the trail of an idea!" We nonconformists might profitably follow the Episcopal practice of using brief prayers interspersed at frequent intervals in the service.

* * *

Now, as to the sermon: The sermons frequently have good material in them, but there are two common faults. They do not develop a theme: there is no progression in them. They are like one of those plotless movies which would be just as intelligible if it were run backward. This could be remedied somewhat if the preachers would make their transitions clear. One of the greatest aids in following a sermon is for the preacher to carry his congregation along with him from one point to the next in a clear transition sentence or paragraph. I have always been grateful that I took a course in brief-drawing at college, along with those who were entering the legal profession. While I do not preach a sermon as if it were a lawyer's brief, that course in college made me wary of making assertions in the pulpit, that is, statements unsupported by factual evidence, and it also taught me to give heed to logical progression in my thought,—in other words, to start somewhere and to end somewhere.

The Benediction. The ministers in most of these country churches, as in many city and suburban churches, followed the choir out, and pronounced the benediction from the rear of the auditorium. This leads me to another point, that is, the custom of many ministers who rush to the rear of the church to shake hands with the congregation after the service is over. In addition to this, some churches have a group of semi-professional handshakers to assist the minister. I attended a service recently in which the minister followed this procedure. He had a battery of eight or ten people lined up to welcome the worshipers. After I had run the gauntlet of these vigorous hand-squeezers, my fingers were numb. I felt like the small boy who, after having received a crushing handshake from his minister, was

asked how he was, and replied: "All right till you shook hands with me." Frankly I felt somewhat as if I were on the midway at a county fair, with a "barker" outside of every tent.

* * *

Now, I maintain that this is both belittling to the minister, to God, and to the church. I always wince when I see in a movie a minister at the door of his church glad-handing his congregation. It is belittling to God to have the benediction pronounced from the rear of the church. It looks as if He were being summarily dismissed in the interest of something more important. Public worship, as I understand it, is for the glory and service of God, and not to be mixed up with a social hour, in which the spirit of worship tends to evaporate, and God is apt to be forgotten in the hurly-burly of social amenities. It is a wrong emphasis.

Furthermore, it writes the church and minister down in the minds of many people who want to be left alone to carry away the spiritual atmosphere of the service. I do not object to having people greet strangers or friends who sit near them in church. That is a Christian grace, and something quite different from an artificially arranged ganging up on strangers.

* * *

Not only that, I have found it far more profitable to let it be known that I am regularly to be found in front of the chancel after the service of worship, for any who would like to see me. I can accomplish more that way than by wildly grabbing the hands of passers-by and giving them a hurried shake. We also put cards in the pews for newcomers and strangers to sign, and drop on the collection plate, if they wish one of the ministers to call on them. In addition, we have ten church visitors, women, elected to assist in getting in touch with newcomers. I therefore maintain that we have profited more by this system than by glad-handing after church. If a newcomer wants a reception after church, and feels neglected if he doesn't get it, there is something wrong with his attitude toward a service of public worship, and the church loses little if he goes elsewhere. We stick to our guns in this matter, and are not stampeded when a newcomer complains that he got a heartier welcome in some other church. The results speak for themselves.

Now, let me indicate a few other weaknesses that have come to my attention while worshiping in various churches during my summer vacations. I remember one old-home-week service in which the congregation was given an "Order of Service" (it should have been called "Order of Worship," by the way) on mimeographed sheets twenty inches long and eleven inches wide. People got as involved in paper as a fly in tanglefoot, and lost their way among the fluttering and crackling sheets, and the service was made less effective for them.

* * *

At another church service which I attended, a woman cornetist played a special number, accompanied by the organ. When a "rest" came in the music she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, and smiled at some friends in the congregation. The minister of the church also baptized several babies, and after each baptism kissed the baby! I saw some of the parents wince. But at that, it may have been better than the frigid form of infant baptism regularly used by a certain Humanist minister I know: "I baptize thee in the name of goodness, beauty, and truth, and give you this lily as a symbol of purity." What had *that* to do with the *Christian* religion?

The administering of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in many Protestant Churches is also less impressive and reverent than it should be. At one such service which I conducted in a small country church, when the deacons brought

forward the Communion Offering, they put the plates on the floor of the pulpit platform. In another church, I'm told that when the deacons bring forward the bread, after having served the congregation, they put the plates on the communion table, which stands below the pulpit platform, and then each of them takes a piece of bread, puts it in his mouth, and eats it as he walks back to the front pew. Meanwhile the minister occupies his chair on the pulpit platform, and calmly watches the procedure. What must be the effect of such slovenliness on the congregation?

Make no mistake about it, we Protestants are in a bad way in this matter of public worship. As Dr. Boynton Merrill indicates, about the only standard of building an Order of Worship in most of our Protestant churches is, "Say something, do something; say something, do something." The worshipers deserve better than they get.

All this drives us back to the question. How do so many of our ministers graduate from our Theological Seminaries without having glimpsed the critical importance of public worship? Are the seminaries to blame, or have these ministers ignored or forgotten what they were taught?

Visitation Evangelism

The Rev. Edward J. Vorba

First Congregational Church, "The Church of the Lighted Window," Bradford, Vermont

FORTY Protestant denominations are in the midst of a great cooperative program called "The United Evangelistic Advance." Like many another minister I took the announcement of this effort last year as but one more scheme to bother with. Especially did one phase called "visitation evangelism" fail to capture my imagination.

Today only a few months later I feel entirely different. The great revival of our Christianity so needed now can happen if our churches will only enter into the spirit of this Protestant advance and cooperate with enthusiasm. The average church can do so, I am persuaded, with real success through the method of visitation evangelism.

It is an old way although we have discovered it anew only in recent years. Jesus himself sent out his disciples two by two to spread the Good News. They went where the people were in their homes, at their work, where they played and presented the Good News informally and personally and naturally.

Such is the method that can be used today. Through the evenings the people of our churches may go out calling in the homes of their fellows telling of Christ and his Church. It is very like the Every Member Canvass, only this time a friendly visit with the confrontation of Christ to people. Too often we have called only for money or for food.

This program will work in any and every church if we will but try it. It is, of course, best to have all the churches in a certain area working out the entire program together. Outside ministers may be brought in. Such a cooperative effort is usually real news to a community.

Visitation evangelism works in the unchurched area where pastoral leadership has been spasmodic or inadequate. Last fall I worked with a little rural church up in northern Vermont. It has had but partial pastoral service for years. In one week the membership of seventeen persons was increased by forty persons making decisions for Christ.

It works in an already churched area. I have been with my present church a year and a half. It is my first pastorate. Fifty-five new members have been added in that time to a resident membership of only 139. This is a strategic church, more so than its size would indicate. It is the center of a fifty-mile area in the Upper Connecticut River Valley. It is not a mushrooming community nor one with a rapidly changing population. In one week's time the method of visitation evangelism increased that already larger membership by 50 per cent. The end is not yet in sight, for another 50 per cent may join, and the method is being made a regular activity in our church life.

A radical change has come in my own thinking since I have participated in this way of evangelism. Before I had thought that if a minister did his work well, the people would respond. Members would come automatically.

My experience in visitation evangelism has shown me that not all the truth lies in such an assumption. It is an inadequate feeling which a minister may have and one which may be behind much of the alarming rises and falls of churches with the popularity of ministers. I see now that in visitation evangelism may be found the real area for the lay person and that he or she can do a better job here than

the minister. Indeed, it frees the minister from "selling the church" for his real work of preaching, teaching and calling with a purpose.

Time and time again the man or woman in the pew has brought in decisions for Christ that the minister simply could not obtain. Why? Here was no professional person calling upon the people. He or she was not being paid for the calling. Here was a person giving time and energy freely and willingly with no axe to grind. Many have been asked to join the church by the ministers but not by a lay person. That is why they feel they have never received an invitation.

How humbling it is for a pastor to hear a caller report that some people said they had planned to say "no" if one of the ministers called, but they said "yes" to the lay person. That actually happens! How healthy that is for a church—that its people are not depending upon the popularity of a minister for their allegiance to the church.

Not only is home visitation done during the week, but as part of the total program factories and community groups are visited and addressed. The impact thus is thorough, and the church goes outside its own four walls.

For a long time we have been looking for a way to do in our time what the old fashioned revival meeting did in its day. I believe we have discovered it in the practical method of visitation evangelism.

Not only this, but it is a way which leads us to the fundamental responsibility and privilege of the Christian layman or laywoman in our churches. Here is where he or she can do a real piece of work. Without exception I have seen men and women enthused about this witnessing. It has revolutionized them, and they have changed lives. How many times even some of the most active workers in our churches have exclaimed after such a program that they felt for the first time they were really doing something for their church.

Yes, I believe that E. Stanley Jones is right in saying that today the case for Christianity will not be won by the clever lawyer with his eloquence pleading from the pulpit. The case for Christianity will be won by the witness.

Too long has evangelism been something we have misunderstood and shied away from. Too long have lay people had nothing to do except work on bazaars and bake cakes for church suppers. Now in the method of visitation evangelism we may return to the enthusiasm of the Early Church and to the true position and task of the laity. If we take advantage of this method, perhaps some day the church suppers will be for fellowship and not for money to keep the church going. Then our lay people will feel that the church is worthwhile and that they have a real part in bringing the Kingdom of our God.

Concerning Pleasant Sands

The Editor

A CURIOUS habit of the ostrich has long been used as an illustration of a fatal foolishness in the face of danger. It is held in some quarters that the ostrich does not bury his head in the sand because he is scared, but maybe to sharpen his beak or scratch his head or some other reason about which he is not communicative. No matter. Superior intelligence should not be permitted to spoil a good illustration. Escape is pretty fundamental in every order and its techniques are innumerable and more or less successful. Or else, in the highly imperiled struggle for existence, pretty much every form of life would have lost out, except clams and the like who spend their lives in the sands till ebbing tides leave them only fossils. But there are escapes and escapes, all of which bears rather directly upon the time, the place, the conditions in and under which this is being written.

If one wishes to forget, to live a little in beauty and quietness and memory, and cherished friendships, these old coastal regions south of Boston are on a summer's day unmatched. Their roads wind through more than three hundred years of human and highly humane occupation. Since King Philip they have never been scarred by war. The great Elm, an hundred yards away, is, they say, two hundred years old. It has weathered every hurricane and gained therefrom symmetry and strength. An almost immortal order of use and wont endures. And yet—

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Night and day the planes patrol the coast. There is occasional gunfire against the southwestern horizon. The Massachusetts State Guard is limbering up its light artillery. And we are being instructed in what to do in case of atomic bombardment. Each one of us, they say, should carry a small portable radio receiving and transmitting set to report and receive instructions from some central underground station which, supposedly, will have escaped destruction and be ready to take over, though the specialists do not agree about what will be left to take over. The skies above us, bright as they are, are darkened by chill fogs of fear which blow in from far regions.

It is easy enough to write all this but it stops too short, and when and how it should go on, this writer does not know. He supposes it began with the feeling that life ought to be secure, that the neighborly ways of Scituate and Marshfield are good and natural ways, paralleled, with minor differences, across our continent and by no means alien to other continents. There have always been those who, for one reason or another, make out a bad case for human nature, and there is no denying the validity of their exhibits. But when one considers the patient laboriousness of vanished generations, the unselfishness of fatherhood and motherhood, the loyalties which have held society together, the funds of courage and obedience which can always be drawn upon, and have been so often abused and too often betrayed, he is not so sure.

Montaigne, who passed his world in review at a time when there was very little to assure any one, reserves one of his very few really tender passages for a tribute to the peasantry of France. His tenants and neighbors. These and the fertility of her soil have maintained the

fabric of France for nearly a thousand years. If the "Grace of God" is not a theological abstraction, but the remedial and redemptive in our fields and our fellowship and even in our souls revealed in countless ways, forgiving, healing, and renewing, then it is never far from us, no matter how we try it. Perhaps the case for the theologian is why we try it so often and so much. And what and why are the malign forces which so repeatedly darken skies which ask only to brood over quiet labor and old, old ways of kindness?

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It may be that preachers and preaching will be again face to face with questions like these sooner than we hoped if hope is the right word. All the signs of the times seem to indicate that, perhaps, for an indefinite period, the position of the Christian pulpit will be challenging and challenged enough, and more than enough. And its messages take a form and burden for which we shall have to wait upon issues the wisest cannot now foresee.

It has always been the province of Religion to offer more than an escape—to furnish assurances to support us in any time of danger and perplexity. "Our strength," said Isaiah, "is in quietness and confidence, our salvation in returning and rest." So spacious an exhortation short-circuits too much, but in the end it is true, if only we find the enduring in which to trust and the unshaken in which to rest. These quests seem to be becoming urgent, waiting for preachers as they climb the pulpit stairs.

* * *

Comparisons are hazardous, but it is safe to argue that no people, nation, culture or what have you, have been examined and appraised from every possible approach and under every aspect, more than our American nation, people, culture or what have you. The bibliography of the literature thus evoked is a literature in itself. Henry Commager's *The American Mind* is massive, contemporaneous and highly readable. Four hundred forty-five pages, bibliography and index. Indices are always a test and revelation. A book with a bare-bone index is very likely to be lost in generalities. A book with too much index is very likely to be smothered with facts, names and dates, which indeed is partly true of Commager's book, but the texture is a living tissue which has achieved an astounding integration of the currents of American thought, particularly since 1890. The book is almost awe-inspiring in the range and variety of the material which the author passes in review.

He takes 1890 as a kind of watershed on the one side of which was an America still under the spell of the founding fathers and, one may add, of the Civil War, predominantly rural, still in the making, self-confident, self-reliant, self-contained, equal to anything, conscious of its unique character and unique destiny, an America for which by no means incidentally, Europe was on the other side of the Atlantic and Asia on the other side of the world. Since 1890 a great many men and women still living have seen another America take form and character, an America entangled and perplexed.

Two chapters are outstanding, the first and the last. The Nineteenth Century America and the Twentieth Century America. The rest of the book is naturally what lay and lies between. Commager interprets this making of the American Mind during the last sixty years mostly in terms of its literature, also all sorts and conditions of minds and books upon all sorts and conditions of subjects and conditions. It is hard to see how one man can manage so much. The chapter on John Fiske and evolutionary philosophy deals luminously with a good deal more than John Fiske and evolution. It is glowingly written as though the author himself had shared a glimpse of a destiny of

man, nobler far than any which the theology and meager science of the past had permitted, and he writes also sadly as though he too saw the fading of that vision through the mists of the tears of things. A later chapter on religious thought and practice handles the later processes and modifications of American church and religious life with balance and insight.

There are few, if any studies which have recognized more clearly and summarized more fairly the influence of religious faith in the making of the American mind, and consequently the making of our history. There have been studies by reputable authors who do not seem to know that there were churches in America or that religious influences had shaped our national character from the very beginning.

There are horizon-widening books which gently rebuke our limitations and generously widen our outlook. The discovery of a book like that is a happy event, because there are not too many of them. This is one of them, stimulating to read, not easy to review. It is significant that the author's summary of the American Mind sixty years ago is a series of affirmations. His examination of the American Mind today is a series of questions. Are we adequate to what will be asked of us?

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Reading the American Mind takes time. Willard Sperry's latest volume *Jesus, Then and Now,* could be read at one sitting if one sat long enough, and with consequent loss, for Sperry's writing needs sensitive savoring; the art of it is so fine. Preachers are not commonly good essayists. Sperry is. He continues the tradition of Theodore Munger and his editor thinks him now unmatched in quality of content, discipline of style and more than felicitous use of literature. These are lectures given in Northwestern University with two final chapters "by way of second thought," six chapters altogether; three of them deal with Jesus and his teaching, the others with Christianity in its relation to its environments and its continuity. The lectures themselves were meant to inform and clarify student thinking, but nothing is stepped down. No book of equal compass could be wiser or sounder in a scholarship which never poses. In the later chapters Sperry considers the "new theology" as though in passing, with an urbane but with a cutting edge. A theology for which the real historical existence of Jesus is relatively unimportant and his teachings of no particular bearing upon the present historical scene, leaves Sperry, as it leaves some of the rest of us, wondering on what grounds it calls itself Christian. He notes with some polished acerbity the paradox of those who with great art use the more sophisticated skills of the mind to disparage the power of the mind, an art which would seem to border, he says, on pathology.

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This August issue, as always, will be waiting for its readers as they come back from their vacations. The Psalmist said it all for all of us, "Send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me." And there is a strangely splendid sentence of Justice Holmes. "We aim at the infinite and when our arrow falls to earth, it is in flames."

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EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT

The QUARTERLY has for the last two or three issues been overdrawing its account. There was such an abundance of good material asking to be used. Therefore, said the Secretary of the Commission, both firmly and courteously, you'd better plan for a shorter issue. In consequence, our files became a good deal like Mother Hubbard's cupboard, and when we

were asked to hold one of the articles over for later publication and the issue promised to be too short, the Editor went to the cupboard and found it bare. "We will spread it," said Mr. Burr of the always resourceful North River Press, to which in format and freedom from errors this publication has for years owed so much and these final paragraphs are to help spread it.

An old book bound in legal calf and yellowed by the years has been for weeks on the table on which this is being written: Bucks' *Massachusetts Ecclesiastical Law* up to 1875—a book of scholarly information and unexpected fascination. being anything but dry as dust. If and as the *History of American Congregationalism* should ever be revised and reprinted some digests of this book should be incorporated in the text for its bearing upon the development of Congregational policy.

And there is one haunting paragraph —in 1679 an ordinance of the General Court dealing with the organization of Massachusetts' towns required "The County Courts to appoint an able and discreet committee . . . to direct in what form, way and manner a town should be settled; having principal respect to nearness and convenience of habitation, security against enemies, more comfort for Christian conversation, enjoyment of God's worship and civility with other good ends." These, changed as they may need to be, are the timeless foundations upon which any enduring order must be built. At what pains and costs and too often tragedy, we ignore them till all our grandiose structures seem to rest upon shaking sands!